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**Otar Lordkipanidze
zum siebzigsten Geburtstag**

Mitglieder des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts und Studenten der Altertumswissenschaften können die Archäologischen Mitteilungen aus Iran und Turan zum Vorzugspreis von 103,60 DM zuzüglich Versandkosten abonnieren. Bestellungen sind an die Schriftleitung zu richten. Studenten werden um Vorlage einer Studienbescheinigung gebeten. Die Beendigung des Studiums ist unverzüglich mitzuteilen.

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Iberien (Königreich Kartli) und seine Nachbarn in achaemenidischer und nachachaemenidischer Zeit

**Akten des internationalen Symposiums in Tbilisi, Georgien,
vom 28. 9.–3. 10. 1997**

Vorwort

In einer Zeit, in der die Altertumswissenschaften und insbesondere die Archäologie zur Erforschung übergreifender ökologischer, ökonomischer, politischer und kultureller Zusammenhänge tendieren und ein zunehmendes Interesse an unterschiedlichen Akkulturationsformen entwickeln, muß gerade den Grundlagen, d. h. den Primärquellen und dem Fundmaterial erhöhte Aufmerksamkeit geschenkt werden. Dies gilt auch für eine der bisher vernachlässigten Perioden der transkaukasischen Geschichte und Archäologie, für die von Medern und Persern bestimmte Zeitspanne vom 6. bis 4. Jh. in Armenien, Azerbaidžan und in den von der Surami-Kette getrennten georgischen Landschaften der Kolchis im Westen und Iberiens im Osten. Im Rahmen dieses Symposiums über das „kaukasische Iberien und seine Nachbarn in achaemenidischer und nachachaemenidischer Zeit“ galt es, das Interesse der Ausgräber und Forscher für ein internationales Forum zu gewinnen, auf das die Probleme achaemenidischen Einflusses in Transkaukasien nicht nur nach Prinzipien der historischen Geographie, sondern nach Kriterien der Fundarchäologie und Quellen-„Exegese“ erörtert würden. Wir verbanden dies mit dem Wunsch, Wissenschaftler aus West, Ost und insbesondere aus der Kaukasusregion zusammenzubringen. Ihnen sollte nicht zuletzt die Möglichkeit geboten werden, bei Ausflügen nach Mccheta/Armodzike, Dzalissa, Uplisciche, Dušeti, Zichtiagora, wichtige georgische Fundstätten in Augenschein zu nehmen.

Die nachfolgenden Beiträge umfassen die Symposiums-Vorträge, deren überarbeitete, schriftliche Fassungen uns zugesandt wurden. Unser Dank gilt den Mitarbeitern des Zentrums für Archäologische Studien der Georgischen Akademie der Wissenschaften für die Unterbringung der Kongreßteilnehmer wie für den organisatorischen Beistand. T. Kiguradze hat die in georgischer und russischer Sprache verfaßten Beiträge ins Deutsche übertragen. Technische und redaktionelle Unterstützung gewährten uns M. Gütte, N. Ludwig, I. Motzenbäcker und M. Nenninger. Schließlich sei dem Direktor der Eurasien-Abteilung des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Hermann Parzinger, für die großzügige Aufnahme der Akten in die „Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran und Turan“ herzlichst gedankt.

Die Redaktion der Symposiums-Beiträge wurde im Seminar für klassische Archäologie der Martin-Luther-Universität Halle vorgenommen.

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Introduction to the History of Caucasian Iberia and its Culture of the Achaemenid and Post-Achaemenid Periods

Von Otar Lordkipanidze, Tbilisi

Two Iberias were known in the Ancient World: one in the West – on the Iberian peninsula, and the other – in the Caucasus, on the territory of present-day Eastern Georgia.

The question of the relations between the Iberians of the West and East was discussed already in antiquity. Among the great number of opinions expressed by the Greco-Roman and Byzantine authors, I shall cite Appian's one statement who in his History of Rome wrote in the 2nd cent.: "Some people think that the Iberians of Asia were the ancestors of the Iberians of Europe; others think that the former emigrated from the latter, still others think they merely have the same name, as their customs and languages were not similar."¹

It is interesting to note that the view on the relationship of the Georgians with the Spanish Iberians existed in Georgia in the Middle Ages as well, especially in the 10th–11th centuries². It is worth mentioning that the expression "Spanish Georgians" does figure in translations from Greek into Georgian of 10th–11th cent. works³.

The idea on the relationship of the ancient inhabitants of the Iberian Peninsula and Georgia is rather popular even today in connection with the problem of the possible genetic relationship of the Basque and Georgian languages⁴. However, this hypothesized genetic relationship, which must be established primarily on the basis of regular phonetic correspondence in the languages under study, has so far not been demonstrated⁵.

The name Iberia does not occur in old Georgian historical literature: Kartli emerges as an equivalent designation⁶. "Iberia" figures only in Greco-Roman and Byzantine literary sources. The etymology of the name "Iberia", "Iberians" (implying only the designation of the Eastern Georgia of the Classical and Byzantine periods) is also unclear, causing a difference of opinions among scholars⁷. There is no doubt that "Iberians" is the common name of the people of Eastern Georgia – "Kartli"⁸, from which derives the local name of the Iberian Kingdom – "Kartli" and the self-designation of the Georgians "Kart-

¹ App., Mithr. 101.

² For details see Dzidziguri 1982, 78–97.

³ Siradze 1971.

⁴ Dzidziguri 1982.

⁵ Lordkipanidze 1991, 146.

⁶ According to the Ancient Georgian tradition, the name "Kartli" initially designated the hill opposite present-day Mtskheta on the left bank of the river Kura, where the Georgian ethnarch Kartlos settled – the future residence of Georgian kings Kartlis Tskhovreba: Georg. 8, Germ. 56.

⁷ For a detailed review of different points of view see Lordkipanidze 1996, 135–141.

⁸ The ethnic name "Kartli" is not attested in the ancient literary sources. In fact this name is conventional. It derived from the geographical (and political) name "Kartli", designating Eastern Georgia, which in the Greco-Roman and Byzantine sources is called Iberia. In the geographical name "Kart-ii", the stem "Kart" is isolated and considered to be the ancient ethnic designation attested in modern Megrelian (i.e. ancient Colchian language) as "Kortu" (the change of "a" to "o" is a regular phenomenon in Megrelian) which is used in reference to the Georgians. The link of this name with that of the tribe of Carduchi, mentioned in the works of Classical authors (Xen., Anab. III 5.15–16; IV 1.1–8; IV 3.1; V 5.17) is supposed (Мемориалы 1959, 105–111).

veli". Their language – called in linguistics Kartuli, i.e. Georgian, in the system of Kartvelian languages, developed⁹ as the result of the differentiation of the so-called Kart-Zan group of language unity, separating earlier from the common Kartvelian parent language¹⁰. Thus the ancient Iberians were the direct ancestors of present-day Georgians, more precisely of the population of eastern Georgia, whose language forms the basis of modern literary Georgian.

Written sources on the history of Caucasian Iberia during the Achaemenid and Post-Achaemenid periods

The written sources on the history of Iberia cannot be said to be abundant, yet they are diverse in character.

Evidence of Greek and Roman authors is contemporaneous with the existence of Iberia. Strabo's *Geography* doubtless comes first¹¹. It contains information about the borders of Caucasian Iberia¹², its main rivers¹³, cities¹⁴, social-political system¹⁵, transit trade-routes via Iberia, running both from East to West¹⁶ and from North to South¹⁷, and individual developments of political history¹⁸. As is known, Strabo's evidence on Caucasian Iberia largely stems from Theophanes of Mytilene, companion of Pompey in his Eastern campaign. Hence, it largely reflects the situation towards the mid-1st cent. B. C. However, the evidence of Strabo, who had used other, earlier sources, is important for the reconstruction of the earlier situation as well¹⁹.

Strabo's evidence indicates the existence of no longer extant works of some earlier authors containing information about Iberia. Thus, e.g. in his *Geography* 1.3.21 Strabo cites the evidence of Apollodorus on the boundaries of Iberia. In connection with the description of the trade route from India to the Black Sea, Strabo refers²⁰ to the reports of Aristobulus, Eratosthenes and Patrocles, who mentioned one of the largest rivers running through Iberia – Cyrus, present-day Kura (called Mtkvari in Georgian). It may be assumed that the description of the socio-political structure of Iberia, characterised by

clearly archaic features²¹, also dates from a period earlier than the main source used by Strabo in describing Iberia, viz. from Theophanes of Mytilene²².

Thus, it may be assumed that the first reports on Caucasian Iberia appeared long before the Roman campaigns to Transcaucasia. Anyway, Patrocles, Eratosthenes, Aristobulus and Apollodorus can be named among the authors who, according to Strabo, had information about Caucasian Iberia. To this list should be added the name of Magasthenes, the ethnographer writing about the events at the beginning of the 3rd cent. B. C. This author, who was frequently referred to by Strabo²³, reported, according to the Byzantine historian Eusebius²⁴, on the migration of the Spanish Iberians to the east of the Pontus, allegedly back in the times of Nebuchadnezzar²⁵.

The evidence of Greco-Roman authors writing after Strabo dates to a later period – the first centuries A. D.²⁶ However, some of the cited sources may be used to reconstruct the history of an earlier period. Pliny's evidence is of particular importance for the historical geography of Caucasian Iberia²⁷, while the cities mentioned in the list of Claudius Ptolemaeus no doubt existed in the pre-Roman period²⁸.

Evidence on the history of Caucasian Iberia is preserved in national Georgian sources as well, but only of the Medieval period.

As noted above, in these sources the local name "Kartli" is used throughout instead of the name "Iberia". Information about Iberia/Kartli during the period under discussion is preserved in two works. One of them is the corpus of Georgian history, compiled not later than the end of the 11th cent., called *Kartlis Tskhovreba*, i.e. "History of Georgia". This work consists of some chronologically successive parts written by different authors at different times, but reflecting successively the history of Georgia from ancient times²⁹. The opening part of the corpus, named *Tskhovreba kartvelta mepeta da pirltaganta mamata da natesavta* (i.e. "The Lives of the Georgian Kings and of their Generation") is devoted to the ancient period of Georgian history. There is no consensus in the specialist's literature about the author of this part of *Kartlis Tskhovreba*. On the basis of one note, the majority of scholars consider that the author of the *Tskhovreba Kartvelta mepeta...* was Leonti Mroveli – an 11th cent. churchman, a bishop whose residence was in Ruisi – the major cultural centre of Medieval Georgia (hence the name of the bishop – Mroveli i.e. "of Ruisi" according to the Old Georgian rules of building names of provenance). However,

⁹ Kartvelian (or "south-Caucasian") languages are genetically cognate languages (Georgian, Megrel-Chan and Svan), resulting from the differentiation of the common parent language.

¹⁰ Lordkipanidze 1996, 131-141.

¹¹ In Herodotus "Iberians", "Iberia" are not mentioned. It is assumed that in Herodotus (I 104; IV 343) Georgian tribes emerge under the name of Sasperoi. This tribal name is preserved in the Old Georgian designation of the south-western Georgian historical province of Speri (already known to Strabo under the name of Sispiris: Geography, XI 4.8; XI 14.9). From the linguistic point of view, the alternation Sper//Hiber//Iber is recognized as valid. In Herodotus the Sasperoi represented a major political confederation controlling the territory between Colchis and Media. For details see Menukhishvili 1959, 91; 116-118; 232-235.

¹² Strab. XI 2.15; XI 2.4-5; XI 14.5.

¹³ Strab. I 3.21; XI 2.17; XI 1.5; XI 3.2-5; XI 4.2; XI 7.3; XI 8.9; XI 14.4-7.

¹⁴ Strab. XI 2.18; XI 3.1; XI 3.5.

¹⁵ Strab. XI 3.6.

¹⁶ From India to the Black Sea: Strab. XII 1.15; XI 7.3.

¹⁷ Strab. XI 5.8.

¹⁸ Strab. XI 3.5; XI 14.5.

¹⁹ On Strabo's evidence on Caucasian Iberia see Lordkipanidze 1996, 76-96; 110-120; 130-152; 208-222; 269-276; 289-296.

²⁰ Strab. XI 7.3.

²¹ Strab. XI 3.6.

²² Lordkipanidze 1996, 208-222.

²³ Strab. II 1.4-9; II 1.19-20; XV 1.6; II 20.36-60.68.

²⁴ Euseb., Praep. Evang. IX 41.1.

²⁵ Muskhelishvili 1978, 24-25; Lordkipanidze 1996, 136 notes 234-235.

²⁶ E.g. Plutarch, Pompey. XXXIV-XXXVIII; Lucullus XXVI; Cass. Dio XXXVII 1-3; XLIX 2; LVIII 26; Appian, Mithr. 103-117; Claud. Ptolem. Geogr. V; X 3; Jos. Flav. Jud. I 122-125; XII 419-421; Arrian, PPE. 14; Plin., NH. VI; Tacit., Annal. VI 32-34; XI 8-9; XII 44-51.

²⁷ 14. Pliny (NH, VI 26-30) mentions the boundaries of Iberia, its rivers (Cyrus – the modern Kura-Mtkvari and its tributary Oczene = Alazonius in Strabo XI 3.2; XI 3.5; XI 1.4-5 – the modern Alazani – Lordkipanidze 1996, 113), cities such as Hermastus (see also n.28 below).

²⁸ Ptol. V, X 3) E.g. the city of Armactica = Amozike in Strabo XI 3.4; Hermastus in Pliny, NH. VI 29-30; Armazi in *Kartlis Tskhovreba* :68: located on the Bagineti hill, lying opposite the modern town of Mtskheta, on the left bank of the Kura. Excavations have brought to light a fortification system and palatial buildings of the Hellenistic period. For details with references see Lordkipanidze 1991, 159-160; 1996, 272-274.

On recent discoveries: Apakidze et al. 1997; on the city of Dzalisa (Zalissa), mentioned by Claudius

Ptolemy, see Lordkipanidze 1991, 170-171.

²⁹ *Kartlis Tskhovreba*: Georg. 3-71; Germ.: 51-130.

in my view, some scholars correctly consider Leonti Mroveli to have been only the composer editor or editor-copyist of the first cycle of "Kartlis Tskhovreba" and the author of some other works. As regards the *Tskhovreba Kartvelta mepeta...* it was written by an unknown author of the 8th cent.³⁰, or even of the 5th cent.³¹. No matter how the question of the time of writing and the author of "The Lives of the Georgian kings..." is solved, it is clear that this is the first extant official "History of Georgia", which acquainted the readers with the main events of the history of the country, beginning from the creation of the world.

"The Lives of the Georgian Kings" begins with the story of the origin of the Georgians and the other peoples of the Caucasus who, according to the author, had one forefather, Targamos, descendant of Noah ("Targamos was the son of Tarshish, the son of Javand, the son of Japheth, the son of Noah..."). Kartlos (the forefather of the Georgians, one of the eight sons of Targamos) had settled at the confluence of the rivers Mtkvari and Aragvi. He called this place "Kartli", which afterwards became the name of the whole country (hence the self-designation of the Georgians "Kartveli"). Setting forth in this way the origin of the Georgians according to the biblical conception, the author then tells the story of the foundation of the Kingdom of Kartli (Iberia), of the founder of the royal dynasty – the first king of Iberia, Parnavaz and his administrative reforms, of the activities of later kings, interrelations with the neighbouring countries, reporting about some events of political history, etc.

Much of the evidence of the "Lives of the Georgian Kings..." has been confirmed by archaeological discoveries and epigraphic monuments, giving ground to scholars for the rejection of the earlier sceptical attitude to the evidence of medieval Georgian historical chronicles on the ancient (pre-Christian) period of Georgian history.

Another important source on the ancient period of Georgian history is *Moktsevai Kartlisai* ("The Conversion of Kartli [i.e. Georgia] to Christianity")³². It is known in two redactions: the Shatberdi (copied in the monastery of Shatberdi in the 970s) and the Chelishi (named after the manuscript discovered in the monastery of Chelishi). This work (*Moktsevai Kartlisai*) consists of two parts: the first is usually called "The Chronicle" or *Moktsevai Kartlisai* proper, narrating the history of the Eastern Georgian Kingdom – Kartli (Iberia of the Greco-Roman sources) from the time of Alexander the Great to the 11th cent., and the other part, named "The life of Saint Nino", tells the history of the diffusion of Christianity in Georgia and its proclamation as the state religion in the Kingdom of Kartli (Iberia). In the specialist literature there is no unity of opinion on the dating of this highly important historical source and on the interrelationship of its parts. The majority of researchers believe that "The Chronicle" and "The Life of Saint Nino" are two separate works from different periods, united and supplemented in the 830s. The first part is of special significance for the study of the history of Georgia of the pre-Christian period, for it narrates the ancient history of the eastern Georgian Kingdom of Kartli (Iberia). The list of the kings of Iberia and the information about their constructional activities, confirmed by the evidence of Greco-Roman authors, epigraphic and archaeological monuments, preserved in the work, are of considerable value. It is hypothesized that the author (or redactor) of the initial part of the *Moktsevai Kartlisai* (compiled not later than the 7th cent.), in narrating the ancient period of Georgian history, used as a source an un-

doubtedly existing but no longer extant Chronicle on the constructional activities of Iberian kings, as well as the works of Greco-Roman authors (in particular an apocryphal novel by Pseudo-Calisthenes about Alexander the Great, etc.)³³.

The cited medieval works are rightfully considered to be a major source on the history of Iberia. Researchers draw attention to the fact that whereas in some cases we find a fairly detailed description of events, in other cases the chronicler limits himself to merely mentioning the kings, without giving any information about their activities or about the foreign political and internal developments during their reign. Therefore in the narration, the chronicler may be said to have strictly followed the evidence of the sources at his disposal, this doubtless importing scientific value to his information.

Thus, although the extant national sources on the ancient period of the history of Iberia date from the medieval period, they have preserved significant information which, with critical source-study analysis and accordance with the evidence of Greco-Roman authors and archaeological investigations, may be used in researching some major problems of the history of the Eastern Georgian Kingdom of Iberia.

The inscriptions in Aramaic³⁴, Greek³⁵ and Hebrew³⁶, discovered on the territory of Georgia and beyond its boundaries³⁷, constitute a major historical source for the history of Caucasian Iberia.

All of them are dated to the Roman period (Aramaic and Greek) and to later times (Hebrew). Some of these inscriptions may be used also in reconstructing earlier social and political structures. From this point of view the titles of the kings of Iberia ("the Great King of the Iberians")³⁸, representatives of the royal administration (*epitropos*)³⁹ and rulers of some administrative regions (*pitiakhshes*)⁴⁰, mentioned in the inscriptions, are of special importance.

Archaeological remains

Archaeological remains (necropoles, settlements, cult complexes), discovered on the territory of present-day Eastern Georgia, doubtless constitute one of the most important source for the history of Caucasian Iberia and its culture during the period under study.

³³ Меликишвили 1959, 23–47.

³⁴ The most important and well-known are: the so-called bilingual inscription from Armazi (Tsereteli 1940b; cf. Tsereteli 1992, with a comprehensive bibliography) and a monolingual Aramaic inscription from Mtskheta (Церетели 1948).

³⁵ For a complete corpus of Greek inscriptions see Qaukhchishvili 1951; Tsereteli 1958. Recently a fragment of a 2nd–3rd cent. A.D. Greek inscription was discovered during the excavations at Bagineti (see n. 15 above). The inscription refers to a female official (τρόφημ) "the keeper of the house" – Qaukhchishvili 1992.

³⁶ Tsereteli 1940a.

³⁷ As e.g., the Greek epitaph on the grave of the Iberian Prince Amazasp, from Nisibis (IGRR: 75, Nr. 192; C 19.IV; 20, Nr. 6856) and the Latin inscriptions from Ostia, referring to the King Parsman of Iberia (Nesselhauf 1958).

³⁸ See, e.g. in the Greek text of the Armazi bilingual inscription: "...βασιλέων Ιβηριον μεγαλον Ξηφαρνούντον", translated by G. Tsereteli (Tsereteli 1940a, 21) as: "the great King Xeparnug"; however, there exists a different translation: "King of the Iberians, the great Xeparnug" (Qaukhchishvili 1941, 168–176). In the monolingual Aramaic inscription: "Mihrdat, great King son of Farsman, the great King" – Tsereteli 1948, 52; Cf. the titles of Achaemenid and Hellenistic Kings – Mehl 1986, 153–155 and the references therein.

³⁹ On the *epitropus* in the royal administration of Iberia see Lordkipanidze 1958, 761–762.

⁴⁰ The Greek Πίτιαχης corresponds in the Armazi bilingual to the Aramaic *bth*, i.e. "pitiakhsh", denoting the head of a military-administrative region – Tsereteli 1940b, 29; Tsereteli 1992, 70–71.

³⁰ Меликишвили 1959, 32.

³¹ Alekisdze 1985.

³² Moktsevai Kartlisai: Georg. 81–83; Germ. 290–294.

First, a few words about the archaeological situation in the preceding period. In the second half of the 2nd millennium B.C. a homogeneous archaeological culture took shape on the territory of modern Eastern Georgia, existing till the 7th–6th cent. B.C. This is usually called the Late Bronze – Early Iron Age. Archaeological remains of this period are quite numerous and fairly diverse: settlements and necropoles, remains of metal-working and ceramic manufacture, sanctuaries or sites of cultic performance. Demographic changes, emergence of major settlements (sometimes of a protourban type) with necropoles, are rather clearly reflected in the archaeological material of this period. In this period bronze metallurgy attains a high level and iron appears; there takes place an intensification of agriculture and cattle breeding, including horse-breeding (illustrated by discoveries of horse-bits and of statuettes of riders and war chariots)⁴¹. But by the 6th cent. B.C. nearly all of these settlements came to a decline or simply ceased to exist. At the same time, at most of these settlements signs of violent destruction and fires are evident. It is difficult to explain the cause of these developments reflected in the archaeological material. On the basis of frequent discoveries of Scythian articles (i.e. weapons – *akinakes*, arrowheads) some assume a link with the Scythian campaigns against Urartu and the Near East via Transcaucasia⁴². It is important at this point to note the following indubitable fact: at the absolute majority of the well-studied settlements and burial grounds of Eastern Georgia, especially on the left bank of the Kura, cessation of life and a sort of lacuna are evidenced by the end of the 6th cent. B.C. to the mid-4th cent. B.C. For example, at the well-known Samtavro necropolis (Mtskheta) from the 6th cent. B.C. the number of burials decreases abruptly and in the 5th–4th cent. B.C. they are almost totally absent.⁴³ The same is the case at Treligorebi (in the western suburbs of Tbilisi, on the right bank of the Kura): a large settlement with a vast necropolis, including rich burials in wooden vaults, distinguished by an abundance of weapons and articles of high artistic quality, comes to a total decline from the 6th cent. B.C. onwards; life is renewed here with the late Hellenistic period⁴⁴.

Compared with the preceding period, the archaeological remains of Caucasian Iberia of Achaemenid and Post-Achaemenid times are not numerous. At the same time, there are certain difficulties in using them for historical reconstruction – mainly because of the absence of differential dating (especially of burial grounds). In the majority of cases general dating is suggested: "Achaemenid period", or "Early Classical period" implying the 6th–4th cent. B.C., as well as "Hellenistic period" to indicate the 3rd–1st cent. B.C. Therefore one of the major tasks of the archaeology of Caucasian Iberia is to revise the datings suggested earlier and to set up a differentiated chronological scale of the artefacts of the so-called Achaemenid and Post-Achaemenid periods.

Over the last two decades a number of burial grounds and settlements have been discovered, more or less clearly datable to the 4th–3rd or 3rd–2nd cent. B.C. But the dating of

⁴¹ For details about the archaeology of Eastern Georgia in the Late Bronze-Early Iron Age (the 14th–6th cent. B.C.) with complete bibliography, see Lordkipanidze 1991, 70–92.

⁴² See, e.g. Пицхелиашвили 1979, 14–15. The participation of the Scythians in the rout of Urartu by Media has not been proven yet (see Пицхелиашвили 1959, 25). The finds of arrowheads of "Scythian type" in the destruction layers of a whole number of settlement sites of Eastern Georgia are not sufficient to prove a "Scythian" invasion in Transcaucasia. It would be more correct to speak in general of "nomadic tribes" (Пицхелиашвили 1959, 256). "Scythian-type" arrowheads were widespread in the weaponry of the Near Eastern states and were used by the Medes, too.

⁴³ Abramishvili 1957.
⁴⁴ Abramishvili 1978, 11–12.

the complexes referred to "Achaemenid times" are still disputable. It would be very important to define complexes of the 6th or 5th-first half of the 4th cent. B.C. Otherwise, all our discussion not only about the political presence of the Achaemenids in Caucasian Iberia (passed over in silence by the written sources), but also about the relationship of Caucasian Iberia with Achaemenid Iran or about the influence of Achaemenid culture on its local counterpart will prove to be absolutely groundless⁴⁵.

The recently discovered remains of a palace and bell-shaped bases of Achaemenid type in Gumbati (on the left bank of the Alazani, in the eastern part of Eastern Georgia; fig. 1,1)⁴⁶ may be considered the most graphic evidence of the political presence of the Achaemenids. However, full confidence is still lacking in their dating to the Achaemenid period. The surviving cultural layer contains remains largely of the 4th–3rd cent. B.C., and of a later period.

Only further studies, rendered difficult by the strong fragmentariness of this exceptionally important relic, may provide an answer to the question whether it really belongs to the Achaemenid period or whether we are dealing with traditions of Achaemenid architecture in the Post-Achaemenid period.

The archaeological complexes of rich burials, the so-called Akhalgori treasure⁴⁷, Qanchaeti⁴⁸ and Tsintsqaro (Algeti)⁴⁹ – all well-known in the specialist literature – are dated to the Achaemenid period. These burials do contain typical Achaemenid items, such as the round earrings in Akhalgori⁵⁰, silver phialai in Akhalgori, Qanchaeti and Tsintsqaro⁵¹. At the same time, all the above complexes feature a number of items that have close analogies in the rich burials of Colchis, well-dated on the basis of imported Greek pottery of the early Hellenistic period (second half of the 4th-beginning of the 3rd cent. B.C.)⁵². This gives ground for the assumption that the rich burials of Akhalgori, Qanchaeti and Tsintsqaro should be dated to the post-Achaemenid period⁵³.

At the given stage of our knowledge it seems to me that archaeological remains of the 5th-first half of the 4th cent. B.C., which must reflect Achaemenid presence on the territory of Caucasian Iberia or their cultural interrelationship, are so far not numerous. The absolute majority of these remains are attested on the territory of south-eastern Georgia

⁴⁵ For details see Lordkipanidze 1985.

⁴⁶ Furtwängler/Knaub 1996, 1997.

⁴⁷ Smirnov 1934.

⁴⁸ Gagoshidze 1964.

⁴⁹ Куфриц 1941, 34–41; Davlianidze 1976.

⁵⁰ Smirnov 1934, pl. 3, 24–25.

⁵¹ Smirnov 1934, pl. 8–11, 61–65; Куфриц 1941, pl. 7; 8; Gagoshidze 1964, pl. 12, 74.

⁵² In Vani such are burial Nr. 9, dated to the third quarter of the 4th cent. B.C. on the basis of the finds of a gold stater of Philip II. of Macedon, Attic black-glazed cantharus and Sinopean stamped amphorae (Vani I, 202–240), and burial Nr. 16, dated by a Sinopean amphora to the end of the 4th-beginning of the 3rd cent. B.C. (Vani 7, 15–28); in Dablagomi a rich burial, dated to the 3rd cent. B.C. by the presence of Sinopean stamped tiles (serving as roofing) and amphora, clay unguentaria, silver and black-glazed kylikes, bronze patera (Vani II, 68–78); rich burial 1 in Sairkhe (Nadiradze 1990).

⁵³ Thus, e.g. in burial 16 of Vani, dated by the Sinopean amphorae to the end of the 4th-beginning of the 3rd cent. B.C., a torque, a silver lunula, and bronze bits of Akhalgori-type were discovered (see Kacharava/Mzhavanadze 1986, 16–25, fig. 11,5; 13,1,5; 14,16). Akhalgori-type bits have been found also in the same period rich burials of Itkhvisi and Sairkhe (Nadiradze 1990, 77–79 pl. 37: 1). Round gold and silver ear-rings of Akhalgori-type have been discovered in a whole number of 4th–3rd cent. B.C. burials (Nadiradze 1990, 72 pl. 34,8; Margishvili 1992, pl. 11,5; 18,7). The presence of two flat silver phialai (Smirnov 1934, NN 61; 62), which can also be dated to the early Hellenistic period, in the Akhalgori treasure should also be noted.

(Kvemo Kartli). It is possible to date with more or less convincing probability the burial grounds (with cist-burials) – Beshtasheni (fig. 1.35), Santa (fig. 1.34), Akhalsopeli (on the map N 37), and Kumisi (fig. 1.55), Ghrmakhevistavi (fig. 1.45), Abulmugi (fig. 1.46), to the end of the 5th-first half of the 4th cent. B.C. But I am not quite sure concerning the correctness of the dating and contemporaneity of these complexes. The complexes containing clay vessels, whose emergence should probably be explained by the influence of the Achaemenid world, deserve special attention. Vessels of this kind are primarily light-clay (sometimes red-painted) jugs with tubular spouts⁵⁴ (6 specimens in all) from the burial ground of Beshtasheni, Kiketi and Akhalsopeli⁵⁵. Phialai with everted rims (commonly known as Achaemenid phialai) were discovered at these burial grounds⁵⁶. Fragments of such vessels were discovered at the Khoylegora settlement in layer II, dated to the 5th cent. B.C.⁵⁷ and in Tsikhiagora⁵⁸.

At the moment I find it difficult to name a more or less important archaeological complex (settlement or burial ground) in the Kura valley and in areas north of it, forming the nucleus of the Iberian Kingdom in the 3rd cent. B.C., confidently datable to the 5th-first half of the 4th cent. B.C.⁵⁹ In any case, I have no information about archaeological complexes of the 5th-first half the 4th cent. B.C. with articles of Achaemenid shape northward of the Kura, on the territory of Eastern Georgia (apart from Akhalgori and Qanchaeti).

The only exception is the mountainous region – the Southern slopes of the Greater Caucasus Range – where a fairly rich archaeological complex, known as the “Qazbegi treasure”, comes from the village of Khevi, in the upper reaches of the Terek. Together with numerous bronze statuettes and articles of adornment, typical of the culture of the local population of the mountainous regions of Caucasus⁶⁰, this complex contains also a silver phiale with an omphalos, decorated with images of swan's heads. This phiale, which has direct analogies from the island of Rhodes, is probably a product of an Eastern Greek workshop of the 5th cent. B.C.⁶¹ An Aramaic inscription is scratched on the phiale, but there is no consensus among scholars regarding its interpretation and dating⁶². Anyway, the inscription shows that the phiale once belonged to a person who used the Aramaic script, widespread in the Achaemenid world in the 6th–4th cent. B.C. But the question of how this article got into the above archaeological complex should be left open (import? robbery?)⁶³.

⁵⁴ Among recent works on the history of the emergence and spread of this widely known type of vessels in Iran, see Talai 1995.

⁵⁵ Daylianidze 1983, 16–20, pl. 4,1–6.

⁵⁶ Hapimannian 1991, 57–58 N 515–520.

⁵⁷ Muskhelishvili 1978, 50–56.

⁵⁸ The principal architectural complex of Tsikhi-Gora is dated to the 4th–3rd cent. B.C. (Zkitischvili 1995). However, the excavations of 1996 and 1997 resulted in individual finds of the 5th cent. B.C. (communication of the excavator Z. Makharadze).

⁵⁹ “Kasrani mitsebi” (fig. 1.20) in the village of Kavtiskhevi (Beradze 1980) and Kamarakhevi (N 5) in the environs of Mtskheta (Jgharkava 1983) are mentioned among the remains of the 5th–4th cent. B.C. but so far there are no reliable dating components for the identification of complexes of the 5th–the first half of the 4th cent. B.C.

⁶⁰ For details, with references, see Tsitlanadze 1976.

⁶¹ Laurenzi 1936, 28; 180; Luschey 1939, 61–64.

⁶² Tsitlanadze 1976, 17–18.

⁶³ Gold earrings with radials (see Bayern 1885, 17 pl. 4,10), which are typical of Colchis in the 6th–5th and 4th cent. B.C. (cf. Chqonia 1981, 20–21), should be considered an alien element for this complex.

The situation changes drastically in the second half of the 4th cent. B.C. and in the 3rd–2nd cent. B.C. This is the period of the formation of the Iberian Kingdom on the territory of Eastern Georgia and of its early history. Archaeological remains of this period have been discovered throughout the territory of Eastern Georgia (their number increasing as a result of recent field investigations).

Burial grounds of this period are known in all regions of Eastern Georgia. Stone cists are the leading type of burials. Along with these, pithos-burials appear for the first time.

Most important are: Kushchi (fig. 1.32), Gomareti (fig. 1.44), Tetritsqaro (fig. 1.40), Shavsaqdara I (fig. 1.52), Abelia (fig. 1.41)⁶⁴ in the south-eastern part of Eastern Georgia; Tsnisiskhevi and Mzetamze (fig. 1.30.31) – in the south-western regions (Meskheti), Bambebi (fig. 1.23)⁶⁵, Tsikhedidi (fig. 1.13), Kamarakhevi (fig. 1.5) and Mukhatgverdi (fig. 1.9) – in the Kura valley.

Discoveries in the Kura valley of 4th–2nd cent. B.C. settlements, such as the settlements of Samadlo-Nastakisi (fig. 1.14) and Tsikhiagora (fig. 1.18), point to an urban explosion, which could be assumed according to the evidence of Old Georgian historical tradition, preserved in *Kartlis Tskhovreba* and *Moktsevai Kartlisai*, mentioning cities long before the foundation of the Iberian state (i.e. prior to the 280s–270s B.C.)⁶⁶. Remains of settlements of that period (with painted pottery) have been discovered not only in the Kura valley besides the above mentioned Ghartiskari (in Mtskheta) in Aghaiani, but also in northern (in the upper reaches of the Aragvi) and in southern regions (Sakravela).

In the light of recent discoveries, rich burials, such as Akhalgori, Qanchaeti, Tsintsqaro (Algeti), dated until recently to the Achaemenid period should be dated to the above discussed period i.e. to the end of the 4th-beginning of the 3rd cent. B.C. Recently discovered rich burials (with some articles similar to Akhalgori), such as Papigora (fig. 1.53), Shavsaqdara II (fig. 1.52) and, possibly, Enageti⁶⁷ and Tsikhiagora⁶⁸, are dated to the same period.

Thus, on the basis of the presently available archaeological material, it may be assumed that:

1. For the 5th–4th cent. B.C., when some regions of Transcaucasia came into the range of Achaemenid expansion, Achaemenid political presence is not confirmed archaeologically in Caucasian Iberia, on the territory where the Iberian Kingdom arose in the 3rd cent. B.C. (at any rate, on lands lying to the north of the Kura). However, some finds of pottery (pots with a tubular spout, phialai) at the burial grounds of south-eastern Georgia as well as on the Khoylegora settlement might be indicative of contacts with the Achaemenid World. If the dating of the architectural complex in Gumbati to the 5th–4th cent. B.C. is validated, it may serve as evidence also for the political presence of the Achaemenids in this region.

2. “Achaemenid” impulses are felt more vividly in remains of the 4th–3rd cent. B.C. They are definitely Achaemenid according to their style and time of production – gold adorments found in some rich burials, painted pottery with triangles⁶⁹ and pottery shapes

⁶⁴ See Bokhochadze 1963 (dating to the 6th–4th cent. B.C.), cf. Tolordava 1980, 38.

⁶⁵ Khakhutaishvili 1964, 71–80 (dating to the 5th–4th cent. B.C.). However, these burials probably belong to a later period – cf. Garouaishvili 1982, 70–71 note 14.

⁶⁶ Cf. Lordkipanidze 1991, 148–156.

⁶⁷ Margishvili 1992.

⁶⁸ Zkitischvili 1995, 96–98.

⁶⁹ Narimaniashvili 1991, 74–79.

(with tubular spout⁷⁰, phialai⁷¹), as well as elements of Achaemenid architecture (such as the double-protoma capital with bull heads from Tsikhiagora)⁷².

In the light of the foregoing, a difficult problem arises regarding the diffusion or presence of Achaemenid elements in the material culture of the end of the 4th–3rd cent. It would be natural to assume these to be pointers to Achaemenid presence. But the following explanation could be advanced as one of the hypotheses.

As is known, following the collapse of the Achaemenid empire a number of satraps fled to the north. It may be conjectured that some of them settled on the territory of Iberia, bringing along their family property. This may find confirmation in the evidence of the Old Georgian chronicle *Moksevai Kartlisai* ("The conversion of Georgia") on the "coming" to Kartli (i.e. to Iberia) of Alexander the Great, together with "Azo, the son of the king of Arian-Kartli", whom Alexander appointed as the ruler. After this, "Azo went to his father in Arian-Kartli and fetched from there eight houses of his kinsmen."⁷³ In G. A. Melikishvili's view, the epithet "Arian" must mean "Iranian" (from the Old Persian *ariyan*). "Arian-Kartli" should imply the southern-Kartli (i.e. southern-Georgian) provinces within the Achaemenid empire⁷⁴.

3. Archaeological material of the 4th–3rd cent B.C. clearly attests to the gradual formation of a highly homogeneous material culture on the entire territory of present-day Eastern Georgia, this possibly being the result of the political consolidation and emergence of a state known in the Classical world as Iberia.

The Emergence of the Iberian Kingdom

The Georgian historical tradition (preserved in *Kartlis Tskhovreba* and *Moksevai Kartvelta*) reflects a severe struggle for supreme power between certain aristocratic families leading various ethnic and political units of Eastern Georgia and frequently resorting to outside help in this struggle. Thus, firstly the ruler of the southern provinces of Eastern Georgia, which were once within the Iranian state, and hence called the King of Arian-Kartli (i.e. Iranian Kartli), succeeded – with the support of the Pontic Kingdom – in extending his power to the regions of Eastern Georgia⁷⁵ lying to the north of the Kura. The Old Georgian historical chronicle *Moksevai Kartlisai* refers to Azo, the son of the king of Arian-Kartli, as "the first king"⁷⁶. However, Azo's rule in Kartli, based on foreign power, was short-lived. A revolt led by Parnavaz, a representative of a noble family of Mtskheta, took place in the country. The official ancient Georgian historiography *Kartlis Tskhovreba* refers to Parnavaz as the first king of Kartli, i.e. Iberia, because he came from the local elite and was supported by the local population.

⁷⁰ Нариманишвили 1991, 139 ff. NN 514, 521–522, 524–525, Гагишвили 1979, 81–84; pl. 4, 74; 248–249; Нариманишвили 1991, 154 ff. NN 903; 906 and later ones: (3rd–2nd cent. B. C.) 997–100.

⁷¹ Zkitischvili 1995, 88, fig. 5–6.

⁷² Moksevai Kartlisai: Georg. 81–83, Germ. 291.

⁷³ Меликишвили 1959, 278–279.

⁷⁴ For details see Меликишвили 1959, 276–281.

⁷⁵ Moksevai Kartlisai: Georg. 82, Germ. 291.

The successful uprising against Azo and the accession of Parnavaz to the throne is dated to the 280s B.C.⁷⁷ The struggle for the supreme power was doubtless bitter, as attested by traces of great destruction and fire at the ancient city sites of Samadlo, Tsikhiagora, etc. Parnavaz, whose historicity causes no doubt⁷⁸, gave rise to the royal dynasty, called Parnavazians by Old Georgian and Armenian sources⁷⁹.

The ancient Georgian historical tradition, preserved in the opening part of *Kartlis Tskhovreba*, ascribes to the founder of the state Parnavaz a number of reforms: territorial division of the country⁸⁰, establishment of state offices, introduction of a common state religion, creation of Georgian writing, etc.⁸¹

The state system of Iberia was given some typical features of the Seleucid State, deriving in turn from the state system of Achaemenid Iran (the statement of the Georgian historian is interesting: Parnavaz created his state "like in the Kingdom of the Persians"). The country was divided into eight territorial-administrative and military regions (*saeristavo*), which were ruled by royal officials, representatives of the local aristocracy turned into royal officials that would rise in rebellion against the king's power, demanding the restoration of their previous privileges⁸².

According to *Kartlis Tskhovreba*, the first King of Iberia, Parnavaz, instituted the office of eight *eristavi*⁸³ and one *spaspeti*⁸⁴. Under the power of these *eristavos* at various places he appointed *spasalars*⁸⁵ and *atasistavos*, who collected duties "for the king and *eristavos*". It may be assumed that the cited information refers not only to the divisions of the country into military regions, but also to the division of the entire state land into fiscal-administrative regions – "saatasistavo", where the king's duty (*kharki sameupeo*) was collected. The *atasistavos* and the regions under their authority were similar to the chiliarichies (*χιλιαρχία*) of Seleucid Syria and Hellenistic Asia. As is known, in these chiliarichies the population paid the royal tax (*φόρος*), i.e. *kharki sameupeo* (according to the Old Georgian terminology)⁸⁶.

The institution of his own cult by Parnavaz should be considered from this point of view: "Parnavaz made a great idol in his name: it is Armaz. He erected this idol on the top of the mountain of Kartli, and since then the place was called Armazi on account of the idol. He raised this idol with great festivities"⁸⁷. The sources have preserved a description of this idol of Armazi: "There stood a man made of copper, and he was clad in a coat of mail of gold and he had a golden helmet, and he wore breast-plates of emerald and

⁷⁷ The accession of Parnavaz is generally dated to 284 B.C. and this date is considered to be the beginning of the Georgian national chronology – Ingoroqva 1941.

⁷⁸ For details see Lordkipanidze 1958, 760.

⁷⁹ Меликишвили 1959, 282.

⁸⁰ *Kartlis Tskhovreba*: Georg. 24–25, Germ. 74–77. It may be argued that in the given case the Old Georgian tradition on the organization of the Iberian State has the same significance as, for example, the ancient Greek tradition on division of Attica into ten territorial demes by Cleisthenes for the history of Greece, or the ancient Roman tradition on the division of Rome into territorial tribes by Servius Tullius.

⁸¹ It is very interesting (and from the view point of the national history, very important) that the official medieval (Christian) Georgian historiography considers Parnavaz to be the first Georgian king – founder of the first Georgian state with its own Georgian language, writing, etc.

⁸² Berdzenishvili 1955.

⁸³ The Georgian word *eristavi* literally means "head of the people", designating the head of an administrative province.

⁸⁴ *Spaspeti* – supreme military leader.

⁸⁵ *Spasalar* (in the given case) – military leader of a separate region.

⁸⁶ Lordkipanidze 1968, 19–22; Lordkipanidze 1983, 199–200.

⁸⁷ *Kartlis Tskhovreba*: Georg. 25, Germ. 76.

beryl, and he held a sharp sword in his hand, which shone and turned in his hand, so that whoever touched it was doomed to death... And to his right there stood an idol of gold, and its name was Gatsi, and to his left, an idol of silver, and its name was Ga⁸⁸.

Thus, here we are dealing with a triad of supreme deities: Armazi, Gatsi and Ga/Gaim⁸⁹, with Armazi as the chief one⁹⁰.

This meant not the establishment of merely a new cult, but of a single state cult, opposed to the local tribal and communal cults. The supreme deity Armazi personified the supreme ruler of the state. It may be assumed that like the despotic monarchs of the Hellenistic states of the East, the first king of Kartli proclaimed himself the supreme god, but, unlike the Hellenistic monarchs, he did not personify a Greek god, but the local ancient deity. This was apparently a political act of major significance: the establishment of his own cult by Parnavaz was designed to strengthen the belief of the supremacy of royal power in Kartli among his subjects. It should be noted that according to the evidence of *Kartlis Tskhovreba* (and according to a number of other data as well), the power of the first king of Iberia derived from the head of an influential aristocratic family: Parnavaz was "the son of the chiefs of Kartli (Iberia) and that is why it befitted him to rule over others." Later on, the royal power became stronger in the struggle against the aristocracy, came out against the authority of the Iberian kings who regarded the country their dynastic property. From this point of view the evidence of the Roman historian Tacitus on the Iberian King Pharasman is highly interesting: Pharasman "holds hereditary power" (*imperium gentile*) and "rules the Iberians according to the ancient right of possession" ("obtinebat Hiberos Pharasmanes vetusta possessione"⁹¹).

The 3rd cent. B.C. – the region of Parnavaz and his immediate successors⁹² – was the peak of development of Iberia.

The territory of Caucasian Iberia in the period of its foundation could be reconstructed convincingly on the ground of Strabo's "Geography". In the north it reached the Caucasus Range⁹³, in the east it bordered the Alazani⁹⁴, in the west⁹⁵ Iberia's neighbour was Colchis (on the territory of modern Western Georgia), the fortress of Sarapana (located at the site of present-day Shorapani) serving as the frontier post. Highly important for the reconstruction of the southern frontier of Iberia of the 3rd cent. B.C. is Strabo's evidence that the regions of Iberia Gogarene, Khordzeni and the southern slopes of Pariadr had been conquered by Armenia⁹⁶. These regions are localized fairly convincingly: in the

⁸⁸ Moktsveai kartlisai: Georg. 119, Germ. 311–312.

⁸⁹ An interesting view has been proposed: the description of the so-called "Armazian triad" in Old Georgian sources is structurally similar to the "descriptions" of the Hittite deities, i.e. the Old Georgian "description" is based on the Asia Minor (Anatolian) model (for details see Giorgadze 1985), which, in turn, is one more proof of the participation of the Eastern Georgian tribes of "Meskhs" in the formation of the Iberian State, the latter being within the borders of ancient Eastern (Hittite – Asia Minor) cultural traditions (Меликшвили 1959, 111–113; cf. Lordkipanidze 1991, 146).

⁹⁰ Views differ on the etymology of the name "Armazi" (as well as of Gatsi and Gaim). The assumption according to which "Armazi" should probably be related to the Hittite – Luwian name "Arma(s)", i.e. "moon" (Меликшвили 1959, 112; 229; Giorgadze 1985) is given preference.

⁹¹ Tac., Ann. XII 44.

⁹² On the list of Iberian Kings and the time of their reign from Parnavaz to Mirian, the last King of Iberia (first half of the 4th cent. A.D.) see Меликшвили 1959, 47–62.

⁹³ Cf. Strab. XI 3.2.5; XI 4.3.

⁹⁴ Strab. XI 3.5; XI 4.1.

⁹⁵ Strab. XI 3.4.

⁹⁶ Strab. XII 14.5.

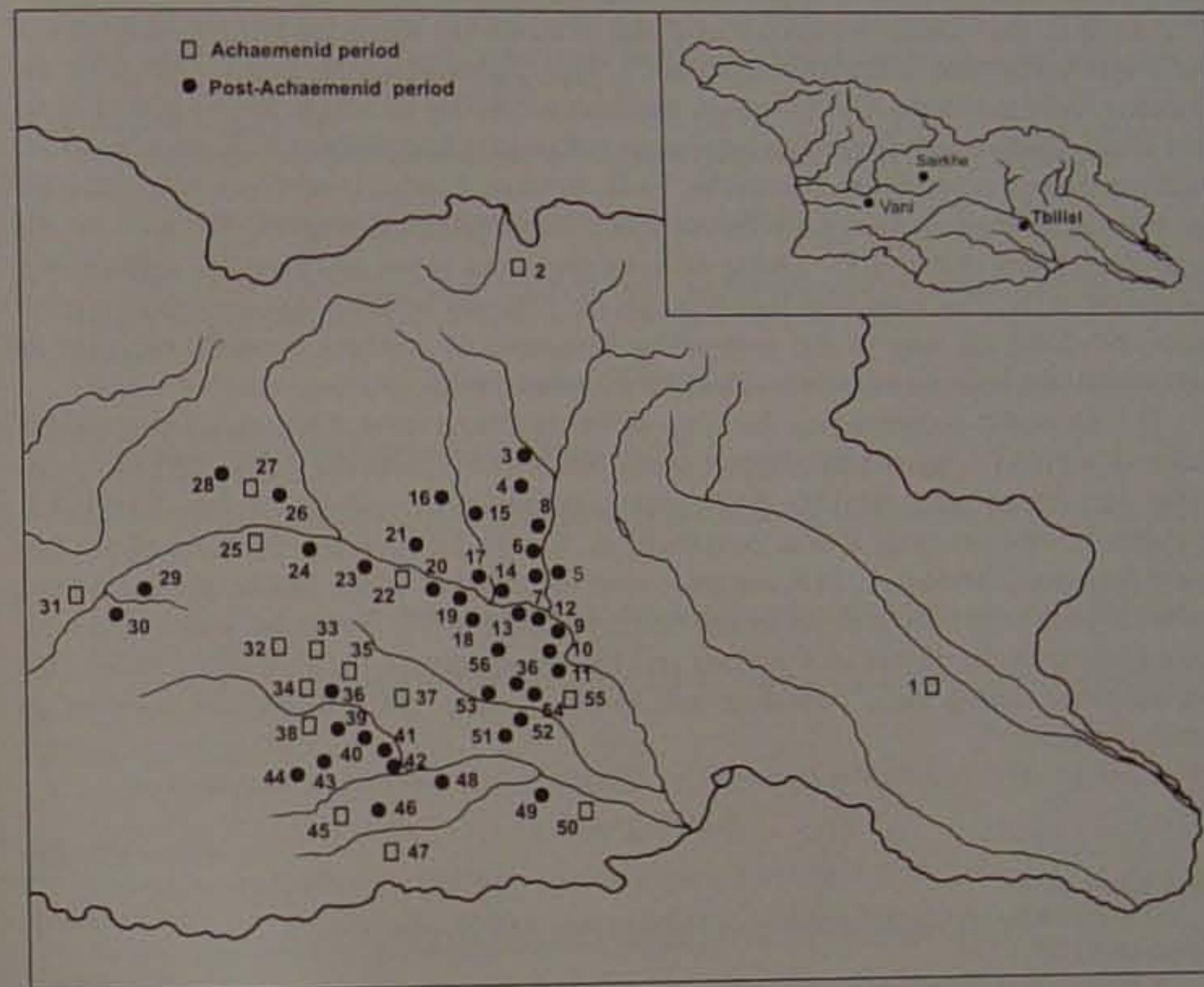


Fig. 1. Archaeological sites of the Achaemenid and Post-Achaemenid periods in Caucasian Iberia.

1. Gumbati (Furtwängler/Knaub 1996, 1997) 2. Qazbegi (Tsitlanadze 1976) 3. Varsimaantkari (Tsitlanadze 1983) 4. Bazaleti (Unpublished excavations of R. Ramishvili) 5. Kamarakhevi (Ramishvili 1990; Нариманишвили 1991, 107, N 5) 6. Ghartiskari (Nikolashvili 1990; Нариманишвили 1991, 107, N 5) 7. Samtavro (Нариманишвили 1991, 106, N 2) 8. Nataktari (ПАИ 1987, 86–87) 9. Mukhatgverdi (Нариманишвили 1991, 109, N 11) 10. Treliqorebi (Abramishvili 1978, 19) 11. Iaghludja (ПАИ 1973, 42) 12. Katsitavana (Нариманишвили 1991, 108, N 7) 13. Tsikhedidi (Нариманишвили 1991, 108, N 9) 14. Samaditavani (Нариманишвили 1991, 108, N 7) 15. Akhalgori (Smirnov 1934) 16. Qanlo-Nastakisi (Гагошидзе 1979, 1981; Богочадзе 1977, 93–95) 17. Rikianebis Veli (Bokhochadze 1963, 34) 18. Tsikhiagora (Zkitishvili 1995) 19. Dachrilebi (Nakaidze 1980; Tolordava 1980, 143) 20. Kasraantmtsebi (Beradze 1980) 21. Igoeti (Гагошидзе 1981) 22. Khowlegora (Muskhelishvili 1978, 40–81) 23. Bambebi (Khakhutashvili 1964, 71–80) 24. Takhtidziri (see below article Gagoshidze) 25. Abano (Нуцубидзе 1978) 26. Dirbi (Нариманишвили 1991, 142, N 567) 27. Natsargora (Khashuri) (ПАИ 1986, 25–27; 1987, 74–76) 28. Mtskhetijvari (Bragvadze/Davitashvili 1993) 29. Msetamse (Nasidze 1990) 30. Tsmisiskhevi (Kvizhinadze 1983) 31. Atsquri (Licheli/Fossey/Morin 1997) 32. Kushechi (Davlianidze 1983, 116 ff.; cf. Гагошидзе 1982, 48–56) 33. Kariaki (Гагошидзе 1982, 61) 34. Santa (Гагошидзе 1982, 96–101) 35. Beshtasheni (Davlianidze 1983, 7 ff.) 36. Enageti (Margishvili 1992) 37. Akhalsopeli (Давланидзе 1977, 126–127; 1983, 7 ff.) 38. Dash-Bash (Гагошидзе 1982, 111–113) 39. Etso (Shatberashvili 1997) 40. Tetritsqaro (Bokhochadze 1963; cf. Tolordava 1980, 38) 41. Abelia (Нариманишвили 1991, 115, N 38) 42. Chkhikvta (Kvizhinadze 1973, 47–48) 43. Alekseevka (Kvizhinadze 1973, 39–47) 44. Gomareti (Davlianidze 1983, 116 ff.) 45. Ghrmakhevistavi (Abramishvili/Giguashvili/Kakhiani 1980, 25) 46. Abulmugi (Dzneladze/Chubuluri 1990) 47. Shori (Tqeshelashvili 1969) 48. Sakraveli (Amiranashvili 1997) 49. Shulaven (Давланидзе 1975) 50. Tsopi (ПАИ 1958, 18) 51. Algeti (Tsinqaro) (Куфтит 1941, 34–31; Davlianidze 1976) 52. Shavsaqdara (Margishvili 1992; Нариманишвили 1991, 114–115 N 37) 53. Papigora (Margishvili 1992) 54. Asureti (Нариманишвили 1991, 115 N 81) 55. Kumisi (Давланидзе 1977, 124–126; 1983, 7 ff.) 56. Kiketi (Davlianidze 1983, 8 ff.)

3rd cent. B.C. the frontier between Iberia and Armenia ran along the watershed ranges of the Kura-Araxes and Chorokhi-Euphrates⁹⁷. The aforesaid agrees fairly well with the situation recorded in the Old Georgian sources, according to which, in the period of its first kings, Iberia comprised the whole modern Eastern Georgia (Kartli, Kakheti) and the southern Georgian provinces (Samtskhe, Kola, Artaani, Klarjeti), south-western and eastern regions of Western Georgia – the ancient Colchis (Achara, Argveti, Egrisi)⁹⁸. At the same time, Iberia managed to subdue some mountainous tribes and establish control over the passes of the Caucasus (the Darial gorge, etc.), which were of major political significance, blocking the way to the devastating invasions of northern nomads; the king of Kartli made the best use of them as allies when a need arose.

It is generally accepted that the kings of Iberia (Parnavaz and his successors – Saurmag and Mirian I.) enjoyed the support of the rulers of the Seleucid states, who took care of the security of their northern possessions and hence they were interested in good-neighbourly relations with Iberia. According to *Kartlis Tskhovreba*, the ruler of the Seleucid Kingdom, Antioch I., in accordance with the customs of the Hellenistic monarchs, "called Parnavaz his son and presented him with a crown"⁹⁹. However, later – after the disintegration of the Seleucid Kingdom and the emergence of the first independent Armenian states during the 2nd-the first half of the 1st cent. B.C., Iberia lost some of its southern regions¹⁰⁰.

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⁹⁷ For details (with a complete bibliography) about the borders of Iberia on the basis of Strabo's evidence see Lordkipanidze 1996, 76–96.

⁹⁸ Mezlikishvili 1959, 290; Muskhelishvili 1977, 60–61.

⁹⁹ *Kartlis Tskhovreba*, Georg. 23, Germ. 73.

¹⁰⁰ Mezlikishvili 1959, 299–301.

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